

DUPUYTREN ON WOUNDS OF THE HEART

ONLY a few years ago it was considered an incontrovertible fact that wounds of the heart are instantly fatal, and many theses have been read before the faculty in support of this assertion. Even now, notwithstanding the cases collected at the Hôtel-Dieu and other hospitals, the contrary opinion is far from being generally admitted. It is, however, well ascertained by post-mortem examinations, that injuries involving the substance of the heart are not incurable, however deeply the instrument may have penetrated, or whatever cavity may have been implicated in the lesion. Plater has cited an instance in which the heart of a pig contained a piece of stick; and balls or manifest cicatrices have been frequently observed in the hearts of animals killed in hunting. The celebrated Harvey found a bullet in the heart of a stag. Latour, in his 'History of the essential and proximate causes of Hemorrhage,' (vol. i., p. 75), reports a very singular case of a soldier, in whom, six years after his cure, a ball was extracted from the right ventricle, near to the apex of the heart, and partly covered by the pericardium. Finally, individuals have recovered, in whom there was every reason to suppose, from the symptoms, that the heart had been wounded. These facts, and others I shall adduce, prove that wounds of the heart are not instantly fatal, and even that, under certain circumstances, they may be cured. Indeed, this conclusion is generally admitted by educated surgeons, as regards wounds penetrating the ventricles or auricles. . . .

Baron Dupuytren: *On Lesions of the Vascular System*. Le Gros Clark, F., editor. London, Sydenham Soc., 1854, p. 105.